British Business and General Aviation Association

Business Aviation: Aviation Demonstrator for Recovery from Covid-19

As the commercial airlines and busy hubs have ground to a halt with scheduled traffic, and face continuing uncertainty about how to get back in the air safely, exacerbated by the now proposed 14 day quarantine ruling, Business Aviation (BusAv) has a huge opportunity to rise to the challenge as the test model in developing and testing safe, efficient, and affordable air transportation, initially for essential business needs.

This Note sets out and makes recommendations on the way ahead for Business Aviation to be used as a demonstrator for safe flight by passengers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Current Situation.

Business Aviation has developed considerable experience in grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic and is already playing a key but often overlooked role delivering vital transportation services, cargo, medical and repatriation flights as part of the essential critical infrastructure around the world. More parochially, services at many FBOs have remained operational day and night, as we recognise our responsibilities to support the UK and our local communities and deliver vital support when it is most needed.

To ensure that we deliver a safe operating environment for our staff, customers, and business partners, we have changed our working practices to incorporate social distancing, sanitisation, enhanced cleaning, and improved support for vulnerable customers. Whilst of course the number of flights is currently heavily reduced, it is clear that with the sort of passenger numbers for which BusAv caters, unlike the congested commercial airports we can handle them safely through our FBOs and our processes once proven could be used as the basis for restarting airline operations. Moreover, as our knowledgeable corporate customers already know well (as an important part of the BusAv value proposition) with little or no cabin air recirculation, generally 4000 ft maximum cabin altitudes and consequent higher humidity, our cabins are healthier places to be for our executives and, with typical passenger loads, it should be possible to provide the minimum required social distancing and a safe cabin environment for our passengers. Business Aviation is therefore the

ideal model to test and develop best practice aviation safe protocols during the Covid-19 pandemic. This model should also be considered for premium traffic on scheduled airlines once proven in the business aviation community.

Operational process

In order safely to resume operations whilst the outbreak continues and has to be controlled ahead of a vaccination programme or widespread immunity, we shall have to demonstrate that flying in our aircraft is healthy for our passengers and crews, as well as that the control measures we have in place are sufficient to avoid the need for the immediate 14 day

quarantine on arrival that is now being espoused by UK and other governments to safeguard their borders.

In short, our industry needs to be proactive (as it always is) in leading the way back into flying for business, at a time when for obvious reasons it has never been easier to get slots at all our mixed mode airfields. However, we shall need to be able to demonstrate that we can offer a safe to "As Low as Reasonably Practicable" (ALARP) service through the application of the appropriate measures such as:

a. Ensuring our passengers are free of Corona Virus prior to boarding. Only passengers that have demonstrated to the required degree of confidence that they are free of infection should be allowed to fly using an agreed disclosure. As a minimum, passengers must self-certify that they have no symptoms and have not been in contact with a suspected case of Covid-19 within the previous 14 days.

   1. Local arrangements should be made for a MOLECULAR test prior to departure and passengers should present on arrival a medical certificate which confirms negative Covid-19 test results. This would allow their release from quarantine on arrival.
   2. As an option, passengers with no symptoms and a completed declaration of health could fly to the UK but would be subject to a MOLECULAR test on arrival and, following a Covid-19 negative test result, could be immediately released from quarantine. If a quarantine period had already commenced, this could be terminated on receipt of a satisfactory test result.

b. Demonstrating that unlike the major commercial airports, we can handle passengers safely, from pick up where appropriate to getting them on board, observing necessary social distancing and best practice to ensure a safe and healthy environment for our staff, customers and business partners.

c. Providing assurance not only that we can apply sensible social distancing on board a business aircraft, but also that we provide a safe passenger environment with minimal cabin air recirculation and low risk of cross infection.

d. Flight crews should be subject to safety management protocols set out by the operator to provide the required level of assurance that passengers would not be exposed to Covid 19 risks from the crew during their journey.

The implementation of this process would only be accepted once all the stages have been confirmed and declared to the UK government. The target start date for this is the 1st of June 2020.

Annex for industry only

Tools for consideration

- Client written declarations on departure of current health status and confirmation of fit to fly using a questionnaire listing the current agreed list of typical symptoms and seeking specific answers on possible recent contacts. High dependency on trust for this declaration.
- Carriage of a medical certificate which confirms negative COVID-19 test results (MOLECULAR test not older than four days)
- Respecting social distancing and best infection prevention practice throughout the passenger handling process prior to boarding. Use of social distancing on board and PPE on aircraft irrespective of whether the group is an isolated family or individual business colleagues. Protection of staff and clients.
- Flight crew to be subject to regular Covid-19 testing by MOLECULAR.
- Fast track Covid-19 MOLECULAR test on arrival in the UK. On confirmation of Covid-19 negative there would be no Quarantine requirements.
- Track and trace application ideally to be available in departure and arrival country. From a UK perspective ideal to have so we can track individuals from a Covid-19 perspective only. *Note; We would be prepared to offer manual track and trace if that is key to acceptance.*

Additional options for proposal

1. *Presentation of such a certification arrival should. permit immediate free circulation of passengers in the arrival country, freed of the need for 14 days self-isolation, for up to 48 hours.*
2. *For longer visit up to 7 days the MOLECULAR test should be repeated on landing and those shown to be free of infection should be exempt from the 14-day quarantine ruling.*
3. *Use of MOLECULAR testing 5 days before departure and MOLECULAR test on day of departure. Benefit increased by social distancing and isolation during the gap between test one and test two.*
4. *When the antibody test has received national and global acceptance in terms of infected recovered people having immunity, then establish a COVID passport to allow access without further testing. Valid for whatever period the medical experts recommend, which could be 6-9 months with normal immunology.*
5. *Release on quarantine on arrival and recall if COVID-19 test is positive.*